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RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001480

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DEPARTMENT FOR D, AF A/S FRAZER, AF S/E NATSIOS, AND AF/SPG  
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY  
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#) [ER](#) [LY](#)

SUBJECT: TO GO OR NOT TO GO: DARFUR REBELS DEBATE LIBYA  
TALKS

REF: BEIJING 06158

KHARTOUM 00001480 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: CDA Fernandez, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

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Summary  
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¶1. (C) Many Darfur rebel groups are ambivalent about attending the UN/AU-sponsored negotiations scheduled to begin in Libya on October 27. This ambivalence is a consequence of three factors, which have influenced each of the rebel factions in different ways: 1) Disunity within the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM), 2) The choice of Libya as the venue for the talks, and 3) SLM faction leader Abdulwahid al Nur's ongoing refusal to participate in the UN/AU process based on his own political calculations. The UN/AU, with the backing of the international community, must address these three issues to increase the chance that the Libya talks will be inclusive and conclusive--rather than a repeat of the Abuja negotiations. End summary.

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Disunity  
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¶2. (C) In conversations with Sudan-based UN officials and non-governmental experts, the disparate elements of the SLM continue to emphasize the importance of dialogue among the factions before negotiations. Without overcoming their internal differences, these groups realize that they will be unable to develop (or advocate for) common positions on security, power-sharing, or wealth-sharing issues, which will be the focus of the negotiations. They fear that disunity will make them vulnerable to manipulation from Sudan and regional governments (Libya, Eritrea, and Chad). Fur SLM faction leader Ahmed Abdulshafie has made these points to U.S. officials and has announced in recent days that he will not attend the talks in Libya. SLM/Unity leaders such as Suleiman Jamous and Abdullah Yehia make similar arguments, though they remain undecided on their attendance.

¶3. (C) UN/AU attempts to bring together rebel faction leaders from the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the SLM in Arusha and N'djamena have been insufficiently inclusive and too brief to address the severe internal problems of the movements. Since Arusha, JEM has split into two factions,

with its lead Arusha representative breaking from JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim, according to U.S., UN/AU, and non-governmental reporting. Invitations to the UN/AU-organized meeting in N'djamena was limited to one faction leader and one assistant, far too exclusive a group to address the splintering within the SLM. Even Chinese Special Envoy Liu Guijin acknowledged in a recent press conference that the rebels' internal fissures have delayed the selection of their representatives to the talks (reftel).

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Objections to Libya  
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¶4. (C) Several rebel factions have complained to UN/AU officials and to Darfur watchers that they were not consulted on the selection of Libya as the venue for talks, aggravating a growing sense among the movements that the UN/AU has made decisions on their future without their input. While many do not object to Libya in principle, they worry that the UN/AU will conduct the negotiations in a similarly unilateral manner. Abdulshafie's announcement not to attend the talks cites the lack of UN/AU consultation to date as one rationale. In addition, UN officials in Khartoum have reported that Eritrea, irate that the UN/AU chose Libya as the venue for talks, may not allow faction leader Khamis Abdullah to attend.

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The Abdulwahid Factor  
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¶5. (C) Unlike other factions of the SLM--which support a UN/AU-led process but are concerned about negotiations before the internal unity issue can be addressed--Fur SLM faction leader Abulwahid Al Nur has announced he will not participate in any peace negotiations until numerous (unrealistic)

KHARTOUM 00001480 002.2 OF 002

demands are met. Abdulwahid has calculated that he can strengthen his base of support in Darfur by styling himself as the sole rebel leader unwilling to relent to the Khartoum regime and UN/AU prerogatives. Western diplomats in Khartoum and UN/AU officials admit that international focus on Abdulwahid has increased, rather than decreased, his support in Darfur and that public Western sanctions and/or travel bans could reinforce the perception in Darfur that Abdulwahid is in fact the only rebel leader looking out for the interests of his people. Abdulwahid's stance has put other SLM factions on the defensive because they do not want to be seen as yielding to outside pressure at the expense of achieving equitable power and wealth-sharing arrangements between Khartoum and Darfur.

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Senior UN/AU Officials Misapportion Blame  
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¶6. (C) While UN/AU officials in Khartoum have a sophisticated understanding of the differing--yet overlapping--trends that could undermine rebel participation in Libya, the higher levels of the UN/AU have been less receptive to this analysis. Reporting a recent conversation with UN Envoy Jan Eliasson in which the issue of participation was raised, a UN official told Poloff that Eliasson responded that "it was the rebels' country and their responsibility if they chose not to come." Such statements obscure the fact that the rebels--including commanders loyal to Abdulwahid--have been requesting outside mediation to address their internal differences and prepare for negotiations for several months. Despite the limited gatherings in Arusha and N'djamena, the UN/AU have ignored these requests and have not provided an opportunity for adequate internal dialogue, according to outside observers.

Comment

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¶7. (C) Some rebel leaders, such as Abdulwahid and Ibrahim, have unreasonable, maximalist demands that will be difficult to address. Other groups are eager to participate in a peace process if they feel they can achieve their political goals--many of which are not unreasonable--in Libya. They fear, however, that disunity in the face of a formidable Sudanese negotiating team and pressure from regional governments will prevent them from advocating their positions. They will resist participating in a process that would compromise them in the eyes of their various constituencies. A common refrain is that "we don't want to be like Minni," the sole rebel signatory to the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) who has been marginalized in both Khartoum and Darfur since signing the agreement. A serious UN/AU effort to facilitate dialogue within the SLM factions--which are not capable of mending their internal differences without outside mediation--would bolster the UN/AU's credibility with the movements and prepare them for negotiations. While international influence on Abdulwahid is limited, a more unified SLM (even without his support) would put pressure on him among the only constituency that could factor into his decision making: Darfurians. An SLM unity meeting would also provide a benchmark on which to judge the sincerity of the regional governments (i.e. Eritrea) and the rebels' commitment to the peace process. If the majority of rebel groups do not participate in Libya, we can expect Sudan to lay the blame at their doorstep. The question then becomes, what next? Khartoum will expect Western capitals, including Washington, to follow through on their warnings of consequences for the boycotting of peace talks. End comment.

¶8. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.  
FERNANDEZ